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Statement submitted by International Committee for Peace and Reconciliation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Poverty may be understood as a condition in which a person or community is lacking the basic need for minimum standard of well-being particularly as a result of persistent lack of income. A person can be pushed into that state of poverty by external circumstances. In that context a person is an innocent victim of the situation. Poverty is a pronounced deprivation in well-being and has many manifestations which include hunger, malnutrition, and inadequate access to education, unhealthy living conditions, inadequate physical security, and lack of participation in social activities. A person who has to struggle all the time for physical survival cannot invest any additional time to achieve higher qualities of life. Poverty then becomes a function of diminished capability of people to live the kinds of life they aspire for.

The economic aspect of poverty focuses on material needs.

It is often argued that world has enough resources to lift all women and men up from extreme poverty. Yet, extreme poverty persists. One often quoted explanation is that there is no agreed upon mechanism to distribute resources to the deserving needy. Another cause of poverty is forced migration. Due to sudden political change in situations rich and well placed people all on a sudden become poor. In that context poverty becomes a function of politics and its removal must be addressed politically.

Luckily, there is awareness in a section of people that the eradication of poverty is beneficial for all. Otherwise, poverty like a contagious disease will also bring the rest of the people down.

In the quest for finding a way to improve the quality of life for all, world leaders came out with a plan called Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to reduce poverty and improve the quality of lives with a deadline of 2015. Since the deadline is over it is time to reflect upon the achievements.

True, significant progress has been made to reduce poverty, more poor children are getting opportunities to go to schools, and remarkable gains have been made to fight against malaria, polio and tuberculosis. More people have now an access to drinking water and the child mortality has been reduced. While the above statistics may be encouraging it is time to think of the people who are outside the statistics. All people outside the statics also need food, shelter, security, health care education and decent livelihood.

Shocking, as it may sound, based on the finding of Walk Free Foundation, slavery is no longer a bygone issue. More than 45 million people around the world are enslaved and they earn 45 billion dollars for their masters. Economic slavery is slowly engulfing the society. According to recent Oxfam Report 1% now own more than the wealth of the rest 99% of the population and control the economic destiny of the rest of the world. Social injustice, slavery, environmental destruction, wars, poverty, economic disasters are all caused by human beings. So, they can also be prevented by the efforts of human beings.